

St Mark's College, 60 Minutes Program
Comments attributable to St Mark's Chairman, Mr Richard Burchnall

On Sunday night (March 4), Channel 9's 60 Minutes program aired a story about the conduct of some students at Australian university residential colleges during O-Week.

The story contained specific allegations made by Aria Kirwan, a former resident of St Mark's College and her family in relation to events at the College during the 2018 O-Week.

The program drew upon graphic video footage largely unrelated to St Mark's College and asserted there was a toxic culture at the College. This we strongly deny.

The story follows an approach to the College last week by a producer from 60 Minutes requesting an interview with the College but declining to provide any specific details of Aria's allegations despite numerous requests, thereby denying us the ability to provide a full and considered response.

The College then also made unsuccessful efforts to contact Aria's family to obtain a detailed understanding of the allegations and to ensure that Aria and her family were properly supported.

Unfortunately, the College learned about many of the allegations made on 60 Minutes for the first time by watching the trailers for the program in the three days before Sunday 4 March 2018 and by watching the program itself.

The College is extremely concerned about the serious nature of the allegations and has launched an internal investigation to check their veracity and will take appropriate action, if and when necessary.

The College is in the process of establishing an independent review of its O-Week policies and practices.

It is asserted in the story that the College staff to whom Aria spoke did not take her seriously and were somehow dismissive of her concerns. This is strongly denied.

Bearing in mind that what she told them was quite different to what she asserted on air, the College staff made it clear to her they did believe her; discussed her concerns and how they would be addressed and also telephoned her mother on two occasions to discuss Aria's concerns and to assure her that Aria was safe and looked after.

The College is committed to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of residents, visitors and staff, adopts a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviour, and supports a culture of reporting.